

CHRISTIAN, GET IN THE BATTLE

February 18, 2004 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

The following is excerpted from a sermon by J.B. Buffington entitled "The Day of Battle," which was preached at Calvary Baptist Church, Lakeland, Florida, in the 1980s.

In World War II I enlisted because there was a war going on, and I enlisted to get into the war. Christian, when you got saved, God dealt with your heart and you enlisted, not to sing in the choir, not to play the piano, not to stand behind a pulpit, not to play in the orchestra, but you enlisted to get into the war! Now your place in the war may vary, but the whole business is that you enlisted to get into the war. God never saved you to stand on the sidelines. God never saved you to sit in a pew, to be a bystander. God saved you to get into the conflict. There's no such thing in the Christian warfare as civilians and soldiers. Brothers, we are all soldiers in the army of our Lord.

In World War II I was a student at the University of Florida. I enlisted in the Army to be an aircraft mechanic. I went to boot camp at in Panama City, Florida. While we were at boot camp, they gave me a furlough, and I went home for two weeks. While I was at home my class shipped out. When I got back to report for duty, my class was in Mississippi. I was a man without an outfit. They said, "There's a place in the band." I thought that would be good for a temporary thing. I played French Horn, so I joined the band. We got up when we wanted to. We had practice about three times a week. We stood retreat a couple of times a week, and the rest of the time we had our own private beach. That was alright at first, but after a few weeks I said, "I've got to get out of here." I watched the postings and tried to get into anything as long as it would get me into the war, infantry, artillery, anything. I could have stayed there and played my horn the entire war, but I didn't want to do it.

One day I was down at headquarters and I heard them talking about cadet training. I asked if I would qualify for that, and they said I would have to pass an exam. I passed the exam, and in a few days I was on my way to Kissler Field, Mississippi, mosquito capital of the world. I stayed there two weeks and went to college training at a detachment in Sioux City, Iowa. We had a few hours in Piper Cubs and the rest of it was college, college, college. Three months later we were in Santa Ana, California, for classification and preflight. They ran us through exam after exam, mental, physical, every kind of exam in the world, all day long. Then they classified us as to whether you would be a pilot or a bombardier or a navigator. They classified me as a pilot. I went to Tucson, Arizona, for primary flight training on PT22s for three months. Then I went to Pomona, California, for three months of basic flight training. After that I spent three months in Texas piloting the AP17, an old thing that a car on a highway would outrun if you pulled back on the throttle. When I graduated from that school on June 27, 1944, I had gold bars on my shoulder and a pair of silver wings.

Man, I like this! Airplanes flying overhead and a speech and the band. My, I like all of this!

From there I went to McDill Field in Tampa, Florida, for overseas training, flying B17s. There you learned to work with your crew, altitude flying, simulated bomb runs. You walk into the bomb bay and there were artificial bombs. You're not going to kill or hurt anybody. There're just play things.

Then one day our training was over and I was shipped to Italy. The boat ride was 27 days.

My, I like all of this, the boat ride!

I pulled into the harbor in Naples, Italy. Rain! Rain! On the shore I see someone firing a big gun. Hey, I didn't see all of this in training. We got off of the ship and went out into the forest somewhere. The rain was pouring down, and someone said, "Boys, this is where you sleep tonight. The tents are over there. Throw your bags off." And all I could see was water. He said, "Just throw the bags off anywhere," so I threw my bags off into the water. I tried to get warm that night, and I put on everything that I had to stay warm and finally I got a little bit warm, and then half of the tent blew down and was flapping in the wind. My buddy got up to try to put it back together, and he said, "Help me." I said, "Let her rip. I'm finally half way warm. I'm not getting out!"

Then there came the day when we loaded on box cars and crossed over to the other side of Italy. One morning they got us up early in the morning for briefing. We saw our target, and I got out there to the runway to go on my first live bomb run.

Imagine if I had said, "I joined up for the band and the uniform and the guys flying overhead and the boat trip and all of that, but I'm quitting. I didn't get in this to fight. I got into this only for the excitement."

Here me. There are a lot of folks who call themselves Christians. They don't mind the graduation or the training or the dummies or the band playing or the ceremony, but when it's time to fight in the Lord's battles they turn their backs in the day of battle.

If a soldier does that, we say he ought to be shot at sunrise, but that is what many Christians do when the going gets rough and the problems come. You quit! You are a deserter!

Ephraim turned back in the day of battle (Psalm 78:9), but that was the whole business that they had been enlisted for.

Christian, when you got saved, you enlisted to get into the war. Everything we do in this church is to arm you for the war. It is not to prepare you to sit idle. The Bible conferences, the preaching, the praying, the singing, the ministries; all of it is intended to arm you to get into the war, not to arm you to sit but to arm you to serve.

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